

June 3, 2009 DRC answers to Commission questions about Fairley/Leland windows application

Question from Commission:

- 1) Are the concerns regarding the aluminum clad mainly a concern regarding repair vs. replace?

DRC response:

Yes, Guidelines 3.1.1 and 3.9.6 direct the Commission that one should try to repair rather than replace, but there are additional concerns:

The Secretary of Interior Standards, adopted into the Commission's Guidelines under 3.9, recommend that the design, materials and workmanship should, as much as possible, be replicated in kind. This is especially clear in Guidelines 3.9.1, 3.9.2, 3.9.5, 3.9.6.

The existing 1970's windows replicate the profile, overall pattern and operation of the original windows well. The proposed new design departs radically from these elements, proposing a flatter, non-true divided light construction, replacing center pivot designs with awning style designs, and a mix of 1916 and 1970s designs where they never occurred earlier. The historic center pivot operation would not be maintained. Removing the 1970s windows and replacing them with new designs that depart from the historic designs removes the link with the past.

The change in materials is also a concern. Per Guideline 3.9.6, wood frame windows should replace wood frame windows. The windows on the west facades of the Fairley and Leland buildings are "character defining" features of these buildings, so aluminum clad frame windows are not appropriate. This kind of material replacement is not usually done on character defining features of buildings and especially not on windows within properties located within National Historic Districts, (although it has been done on individual landmark buildings).

Question from Commission:

- 2) What are the materials concerns regarding the aluminum clad as far as wear and tear, how it looks etc.?

DRC response:

There are perceptible design differences in the construction of wood windows and aluminum clad wood windows. Aluminum clad wood windows often do not faithfully reproduce historic details because of the limitations of shaping aluminum to form details that would normally be shaped from wood. This is particularly true of the proposed muntins (wood pieces -seen on the outside of the glass), that are visibly flatter in both profile and in elevation. The muntins play an important role in creating the façade's characteristic sense of tracery.

There are no existing examples of multi-paned center pivot windows reproduced in aluminum clad wood for the Commission to review. The types of historic wood windows that have been reproduced in aluminum clad wood are simpler in details and easier to reproduce to look like historic windows. The Corner Market is a good example of wood replacement multi-paned pivot windows. The manufacturer of these windows is local and still makes pivot windows.

The Commission's Guidelines 3.1.1 and 3.9 advise repairing before replacing. Aluminum clad wood windows are integral units that cannot be repaired; therefore a unit must be replaced in its entirety if a part fails. Wood windows are constructed in pieces, therefore the pieces can be repaired/replaced when they fail. This type of construction better meets Guidelines 3.1.1 and 3.9.

While sustainability is not mentioned in our guidelines, one of the justifications for changing the windows is sustainability and the wish to get a LEED credential. If a window has problems, the assumption seems to be that the warranty will simply allow a quick and wholesale replacement. This may make things easier from an economic point of view in the short term perhaps; however, it is far from the standard of "better to repair than replace," a principle of good historic preservation or from principles of sustainability, for that matter. Part of the justification for the aluminum clad wood windows has been "sustainability" and yet the "planned obsolescence" model, suggested by the attachment to the warranty provision, does not seem particularly sustainable in the long run.

Another consideration: Aluminum, because the very involved process involving the mining of bauxite, production and transportation, is not a very sustainable material and is in increasingly short supply; so, the replacement of wood windows by an aluminum clad product does not seem to be justified, if the design is shooting for the highest standards of sustainability or long term economic savings.

#### Question from Commission:

3) The DRC Summary states "After field inspection, the DRC determined that most, if not all, of the windows on the façade can be repaired.... "

There were notes from Heather about the April 7, 2009 tour of windows with Karin Link and Alex Rolluda. From the notes it appeared you visited 5 sites but could not see the condition of the windows because they were covered by displays. There were no notes about the condition of any windows, sills, or walls. Did the DRC members visit the same five sites (Magic Shop, Mastercraft Leather, Pike Place Gifts, Holy Cow, and Golden Age Collectables)? How many windows were inspected by the DRC? How did the DRC make the determination "that most, if not all of the windows could be repaired?"

There seems to be concern among Commissioners that there hasn't been adequate "proof" or documentation that a great majority of the windows proposed to be replaced are in "bad"(14) or "very bad" (42) condition. Is the Survey of Existing Conditions, Revised November 2 sufficient? Do we need more information about the definition used to categorize the windows, or another review by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party?

Did any Commissioners, other than Sue Zuege and Sharron Shinbo see the windows in the Constituency office? It was easy to see rotting sashes, ample mold growth, windows that would not close water damage on sills and along the base of the wall. The appearance of mold and smell strong smell of mildew caused by continuous water intrusion coupled with the failing interior putty containing asbestos did not leave the impression that this office was, in any way, a healthy work environment for tenants or the public. Did the DRC see these windows and consider them repairable?

DRC Response:

The DRC reviewed an elevation drawing prepared by the PDA to indicate window condition. The DRC asked for a more complete window condition survey, but received an abbreviated study.

DRC members toured the windows on the Fairley/Leland western façade to verify what was shown in the abbreviated window study, going into all levels of Lowell's Restaurant, the Athenian Restaurant, Rotary Grocery, and every space along the western façade in the two DownUnder levels that was accessible. They also looked at the windows from the two footbridges across Western, and from street level. In the cases where tenants had blocked the windows with displays, the committee members looked at any uncovered windows in the space.

DRC members consistently noticed that putty needed replacing, the windows needed repainting, and sometimes the sills needed work. The descriptions "Very bad", "Bad", "Fair", etc., indicated the degree to which the windows needed this work. It was the opinion of DRC members that these repairs could be made without full replacement of the windows. DRC members recognized that there might be windows (or parts of them) that did need replacement due to poor condition but no notes were taken on which windows or parts needed replacement.

Staff notes taken during the 4/7/09 tour with Karin Link and Alex Rolluda were about the blockage of windows, not about the DRC's verification of window condition.

DRC members wondered how an adequate survey could be completed with this much shelving blocking access to the windows. Also, they wondered how it was possible for the PDA to decide that all the windows are in such poor condition and that they have to be replaced?

The DRC is aware that tenants complain about overheating during the summer, but, in many cases, they can't open the windows because they have shelving stuck up against the windows. So one of the tenant comfort issues (lack of comfort), at least during the summer, may be tied to the rearrangement of the furniture plan, never approved by the Commission, and may have nothing to do with the existing windows.

The DRC believes that it would be helpful to review a more complete survey conducted by a third party.

Staff has confirmed that the only Commissioners who toured the Market Constituency Office were Sharron Shinbo and Sue Zuege.

Question from Commission:

4) Many of the concerns expressed by the DRC relate to the sub points in Section 3.1 General Principles for Design in the Market. The statement that precedes the sub points as the important, overarching “umbrella” statement of the Commission’s responsibility when making judgments of design. The sub points that follow are guidelines, not directives, which is why “should” is used more often than “must.”

"The Commission is responsible for making those judgments of design which assure that the character of the Market is preserved and that the architectural, cultural, economic and historical qualities of the District are maintained. Many of the elements that establish the character and quality of the District must adapt harmoniously to changing market activities. The following guidelines shall be used as a basis for decision-making on the approval of a design with consideration give to historical precedent. (underline mine).

We all understand the windows are an important character of the façade. We do not all agree that the design of the current windows from the 1970’s is “historical.” However, we can agree that the activities behind the windows have changed. The current pivot windows have been described as reminiscent of the former warehousing functions of the market. Today, and in the future, we want to maintain a more efficient, historical structure that does not function as a warehouse. Today we have the diversity of small owner operated businesses, larger successful businesses that have grown within the market, and a vitally important childcare center. We have heard the public testimony and seen the survey of the tenants. They say the current pivot window are heavy, unsafe for children and the general public (falling glass and items from restaurants), difficult to operate, and do not protect the children and tenants from cold in the winter and heat in the summer. Isn’t the Commission’s design challenge to think about the windows in a way that will “adapt harmoniously to changing market activities” to better serve the tenants’ and general publics’ needs?”

DRC response:

A short answer is that while the “character and quality of the District must adapt harmoniously to changing market activities,” it is a historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places. If it is to adapt “harmoniously,” it must do so within the framework of the Commission’s guidelines, in particular, 1.3, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.13, 3.2.14, 3.9, 3.9.1, 3.9.2, 3.9.4, 3.9.5, 3.9.6 and 3.9.9, and without losing or compromising its essential integrity for which the district is listed to the National Register of Historic Places.